

SCENTED PRODUCTS AWARENESS

INTRODUCTION

The term “scented” generally refers to a fragrance, perfume or aroma that adds “smell” to a product. Scents are usually made from a mixture of natural and man-made chemicals and typically contain between 100 to 350 ingredients. Scents are widely used in cosmetic, personal care and household products such as:

Shampoo and conditioners	Soaps
Hairsprays	Cosmetics
Deodorants	Air fresheners, deodorizers
Colognes and aftershaves	Oils
Fragrances and perfumes	Candles
Lotions and creams	Laundry Detergents
Potpourri	Fabric softeners
Industrial and household Chemicals	Cleaning products

WHAT DOES “UNSCENTED” OR “FRAGRANCE-FREE” REALLY MEAN?

Health Canada regulates fragrances and personal care products and labeling under the Cosmetic Regulations of the *Food & Drugs Act*. Even products labeled “unscented” or “fragrance-free” may actually contain fragrances used to mask the smell of certain ingredients.

HOW CAN SCENTS ADVERSELY AFFECT INDIVIDUALS?

The chemicals in scented products evaporate and can be inhaled by anyone in the general area. Many people may not find scents objectionable while some people may experience mild irritation. However, those with allergies or other sensitivities may experience more severe symptoms such as coughing, sneezing, gagging, shortness of breath, rhinitis, asthma attacks, headaches or dizziness.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU ARE AFFECTED BY A SCENTED PRODUCT?

- Communicate your concerns in a respectful, open manner to the person and let them know which specific scented product affects you.

- Kindly request that the person reduces or eliminates the use of the scented product.
- If the resolution is successful, recognize the cooperation of the person involved. If the resolution is not successful, revisit the situation and review other potential solutions.
- It may be necessary to involve your Manager/Supervisor if resolutions are not successful, or if you are not comfortable approaching the person yourself.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU ARE APPROACHED ABOUT YOUR USE OF A SCENTED PRODUCT?

- Be empathetic if you are approached about a scent sensitivity issue.
- Work together to find a mutually agreeable solution. Ask questions about the factors that make the person’s symptoms better or worse (e.g. fragrance type, amount used, etc.).
- Minimize your use of scented products, and avoid applying them in the workplace.
- If you are not comfortable with the individual’s request, it may be necessary to involve your Manager/Supervisor to review the situation and explore other potential solutions.
- Contact the Human Resources Department for assistance if necessary.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- Be considerate of others and avoid using scented products in the workplace.
- It may be difficult to find some products that are unscented or scent-free. If you must use a scented product, use it sparingly. As a general guideline, no one more than an arm’s length away from you, should be able to smell your fragrance.

Occupational Health and Safety Department

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